

some children. Sometimes children will turn completely against any form of milk food, once they are weaned. It is as if they said to the mother, "If I can't have milk from your breast, then I won't have it at all." In this case, the weaning itself appears to have been felt as a *punishment* for previous sadistic wishes towards the breast.

On the whole, it is best to respect these minor idiosyncrasies arising from anxiety. It is unwise to force the child to eat the sort of food which he finds difficult, especially where it does not happen to be absolutely essential to a normal diet (for example, milk puddings). If we remember that these are not purely local and mechanical issues, but indications of deep undercurrents in the child's emotional life as a whole, we shall not so readily attempt to compel the child to follow our own oral patterns.

The more general difficulty about eating solid food will often pass away after the second year, especially in those children who do not eat alone, but have companions at the meal-table—for instance, children in large families or those who have their main meal at a nursery school. With children who are in general reluctant eaters, too, one of the best remedies is to arrange for the meal to be taken in company with other children. The child's anxieties about masticating, or other fears connected with food, are more easily resolved if he has the support of watching other children eat these things naturally and happily, and take pleasure in them. To stand over the child, as many mothers and nurses do, attempting to cajole or bribe or threaten him into eating food he does not want, invariably increases the difficulty.

Some children, if they gain the extra libidinal satisfaction of this special attention on the mother's part, or the extra

support against their own super-ego of the mother's command to eat, can then manage to chew and swallow the food required. But, as a rule, this is a situation that repeats itself. The child goes on needing this persuasion or command, and comes to tyrannise over his mother or nurse more and more fully with regard to meals. If he eats his meal in a nursery school, and is left to eat or not as he wishes, seeing other children enjoy their meals in the ordinary way, and with no one making any fuss or comment if he does not, he does seem to learn to master his anxiety; or perhaps the anxiety is itself actually lessened, since the child finds that other children, as